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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL
FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

Letter dated 2 November 2000 from the Permanent Representative of
Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the
secretariat of the Commission on Human Rights

I have the honour to transmit herewith the information of the State Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons, entitled "Human rights violations with respect to prisoners of war and hostages kept in Armenia and the Nagorno Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan".

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and the attached information* as an official document of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights under item 9 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed): Isfandiyar VAHABZADA

Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* Reproduced as received, in English and Russian only.

Annex

Information on human rights violations with respect to prisoners of war and hostages kept in Armenia and the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan

As a result of the aggression by the Republic of Armenia, one fifth of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been occupied and more than 800 settlements and 6,000 industrial, agricultural and other enterprises have been looted, plundered and destroyed as have 150,000 homes with a total area of over 9 million square metres and 4,366 social and cultural facilities, among them 690 secondary schools, 850 pre-school and 490 medical institutions, 927 libraries, 22 museums, 6 State theatres and concert halls, and so on. Farmland, water resources and water supply infrastructure have been put out of use and the rail, road, and other communication systems have been disrupted. All in all, enormous damage, provisionally estimated to be in the order of over US\$ 22 billion, has been inflicted on the country's economy.

The main victims of Armenia's aggression are the totally innocent, peaceable inhabitants of Azerbaijan - the elderly, women and children. More than 18,000 people have been killed and more than 50,000 have been wounded and crippled. The number of refugees and displaced persons is around 1 million, more than 200,000 of whom are Azerbaijanis, Russians, Kurds and persons belonging to other ethnic groups deported from Armenia at the end of 1988.

Armenia is the first country since the war to have embarked on a criminal policy of ethnic cleansing and "scorched earth" tactics, of destroying and reducing populated areas to ashes, which constitutes a crime of genocide against the people of Azerbaijan. The tragedy of the Azerbaijani population of the town of Khojaly captured by Armenians in February 1992 attests to this fact. More than 1,000 peaceable inhabitants of this town were tortured to death or froze in the mountains while trying to escape from the violence. Appalling violations of the corpses of innocent victims were committed, including cases of scalping and decapitation. Hundreds of inhabitants of the town were driven into captivity. According to Khojaly inhabitants who escaped Armenian captivity, they were systematically subjected to torture and beatings and many women and children were raped.

The State Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons has ample evidence of the crimes and blatant violations of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols committed by the Armenian side.

Hundreds of Azerbaijani citizens have been tortured and killed in Armenian captivity. On 16 February 1994, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia issued a press communiqué confirming that eight Azerbaijani prisoners of war had been gunned down in Yerevan while trying to escape. After insistent requests from the State Commission, the bodies of 10 Azerbaijani prisoners were brought back from Yerevan to Baku on 23 March 1994 with representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross; on 24 and 25 March 1994 these corpses were subject to forensic examination. They were photographed, and additional laboratory, chemical, histological, biological and investigative tests were performed on the bones, tissues and other organs. From the results of the analysis, it was ascertained that eight corpses had transverse bullet wounds to the temporal region of the head, in three cases the persons had been shot at point-blank range, and in the other cases at very close range, consistent with premeditated killing. During the examination, the liver, spleen and heart of one of the corpses was found to be missing and the pinna of the right ear had been cut off. Both ears and the right ear respectively had been cut off in two other cases. The seventh corpse had a transverse bullet wound from a shot to the front of the thorax; the eighth had a deep cut wound to the front of the neck; the ninth had multiple hairline fractures of ribs on both sides of the thorax, and the tenth showed advanced signs of emaciation [cachexia].

On 7 and 8 April, the bodies were examined for a second time by an independent expert from a neutral country, Professor Derek Pounder, who is recognized as an international expert in forensic medicine and a member of the Presidium of the International Academy of Legal Medicine and of Social Medicine and the British organization "Doctors for Human Rights". Having confirmed, in the main, the results of the examinations performed by the Azerbaijani commission of experts, Professor Pounder said that it was clear that six of the Azerbaijani prisoners of war had been shot at point-blank range in the upper part of the head with the same weapon (pistol), and dismissed the claim that they had died "while attempting to escape". This is one example of the Armenian authorities' persistent endeavour to misinform the international community of the true nature of the crime committed.

According to the Akhmedovs, who returned from Armenian captivity in 1994 (and live in a tented camp in Bardinsk district of Azerbaijan), their children Elchina and Fidaya were among 25 unarmed inhabitants of the village of Gajar in the Fizuli district of Azerbaijan who were surrounded on 17 August 1993 and shot by Armenian fighters.

When she returned from captivity, Arzu Amralieva (now living in a hostel in the town of Gandzha) reported that on 18 April 1993, the Armenian occupiers shot on the spot 19 of 30 people they taken hostage, including her husband, mother, sister, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, and the wife of her uncle.

Fifty-seven-year-old Gasan Guseinov (now living at 51 Rustamov Street, 8 km village, Baku) reported that on 23 October 1993, 26 out of 40 defenceless persons detained in the district of Goradiz village were killed.

Sixty-one-year-old Budag Alyshanov (now living in Yagubly, Oguz region) was a witness when, in the village of Drombon, an Armenian by the name of Arkady brutally killed five Azerbaijanis who were being made to perform heavy labour.

According to Raisa Nukhieva, who returned from Armenian captivity on 15 September 1994 (now living in Flat 45, 2 Z. Gambarov Street, Rasul-zad, Baku), Samaya Kerimova was unable to withstand the continued abuse and humiliation to which she and her 2-year-old daughter, Nurlana, were subjected and committed suicide in captivity. As a result of open wounds to her head and body, Nurlana nearly went blind and is currently staying with Raisa Nukhieva at the above address.

Fifteen-year-old Nazaket Mamedova (who lives at the former pioneer camp, Mardakan village, Baku) saw her father being tortured and his ear cut off. Her mother was driven insane by blackmail and threats, and in the end, her daughter was sold to the family for 4 million Russian roubles.

Vladimir Shevelev, who was born in 1926, was taken prisoner on 22 June 1993 in the town of Agdam. Hoping, in his words, that the Armenians would leave peaceable inhabitants - especially Russians - alone, he and members of his family remained in the town after it was captured by Armenians. His mother, sister and older, bedridden brother were shot before his very eyes. In one of the streets of Agdam he saw an Azerbaijani tank that had been blown up and was surrounded not only by the bodies of the crew members, but also by dead

women and children whose faces had been disfigured beyond recognition. Mr. V. Shevelev was released from Armenian captivity on 28 April 1994 and now lives in Flat 7, House 40, Street 39-40, Block 2213, Pirallakhy village, Baku.

A resident of the village of Bashlybely in Kelbajar district of Azerbaijan, Binnat Akhmedov (now living in a hostel at the Pedagogy Institute in the town of Gandzha) witnessed three Armenian fighters gunning down peaceable civilians, killing 10 and wounding several others, on 18 April 1994 during the occupation of Kelbajar district.

Murvat Agaev, a resident of the village of Kyurdmakhmudlu in Fizuli district, was taken hostage together with his son Yashar, who was killed in front of him. Mr. M. Agaev himself was severely beaten and his ear was cut off. His hands were bound with wire, he was suspended from a tree and a fire was lit beneath him, burning his feet. Mr. M. Agaev was released on 19 August 1994 and now lives in the village of Eni Geseb in Beylagan district of Azerbaijan.

According to Babaev, now returned from Armenian captivity, Magerram Makhyatdinov was driven insane by systematic beatings from Gazmanov, the deputy chief of police in the town of Gafan (Armenia), and died of internal haemorrhaging.

A large group of the Azerbaijani hostages being held by the Armenian side consists of entire families. For example, on 26 February 1992, six members of the Mamedov family, including three women, escaping the carnage in Khojaly fell into the hands of Armenian fighters. In March 1993, 15 members of the Guliev family from the village of Kiyasly in Kelbajar district were taken hostage, and in July of the same year, 19 members of the Hukhiev family, the oldest of whom was 80 and the youngest only 4, from Gerazyly in Fizuli district were also taken hostage.

As at 20 June 2000, the State Commission had registered 4,968 Azerbaijani citizens as missing as a result of the Armenian aggression. This figure includes 71 children, 320 women and 358 minors.

Information available to the State Commission shows that 783 of those considered missing, including 18 children, 43 women and 56 elderly people, were being held captive by the Armenians during the military action, although the Armenian side denies this fact even today. These people were not officially registered by the International Committee of the Red Cross. On the basis of the information obtained from former hostages and prisoners of war, a list of missing persons who are thought to have been captured by the Armenian side has been drawn up. The list also indicates where they may be being held.

A group seeking to promote the release of prisoners of war and locate missing persons, consisting of Bernhardt Klasen (Germany), Svetlana Gannushkina (Russian Federation) and Paata Zakareshvili (Georgia), has repeatedly travelled to Yerevan, Hankendi and Baku and received information in Yerevan in May 1999 concerning the Azerbaijanis on the missing persons list. It has been established that these prisoners of war died in Armenian captivity, although for more than six years the Armenian side denied the fact that they had been held in captivity. Once again, this illustrates that the imprisonment of hundreds of Azerbaijanis is being concealed from international organizations. According to the information received, the majority of them have died in captivity over the years, it is possible that, even today, dozens are still being held against their will and used as slaves.

State Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan on
Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons
